

Chapter Five

Composing

We see emerging, piecemeal and with the greatest ambiguity, the seeds of a new noise, one exterior to the institutions and customary sites of political conflict. A noise of Festival and Freedom, it may create the conditions for a major discontinuity extending far beyond its field. It may be the essential element in a strategy for the emergence of a truly new society.

In the tumult of time, in the Manichaeism of a political debate stupidly trapped in a facile and sterile economism, opportunities to grasp an aspect of utopia, reality under construction, are too rare not to attempt to use this scanty clue to reconstruct that reality in its totality.

Conceptualizing the coming order on the basis of the designation of the fundamental noise should be the central work of today's researchers. Of the only worthwhile researchers: undisciplined ones. The ones who refuse to answer new questions using only pre-given tools. Music should be a reminder to others that if *Incontri* was not written for a symphony orchestra, or the *Lamentations* for the electric guitar, it is because each instrument, each tool, theoretical or concrete, implies a sound field, a field of knowledge, an imaginable and explorable universe. Today, a new music is on the rise, one that can neither be expressed nor understood using the old tools, a music produced elsewhere and otherwise. It is not that music or the world have become incomprehensible: the concept of comprehension itself has changed; there has been a shift in the locus of the perception of things.

Music was, and still is, a tremendously privileged site for the analysis and revelation of new forms in our society. It announced, before the rest of society,

the destruction of sacrifice by exchange and representation, then the stockpiling of the simulacrum of usage in repetition. Thus what once were rites today appear to be wastefulness; what was the foundation of peace appears as antisocial violence; what was an element in the social whole appears as a work of art to be consumed. Our society mimics itself, represents and repeats itself, instead of letting us live.

But the very death of exchange and usage in music, the destruction of all simulacra in accumulation, may be bringing about a renaissance. Complex, vague, recuperated, clumsy attempts to create new status for music—*not a new music, but a new way of making music*—are today radically upsetting everything music has been up to this point. Make no mistake. This is not a return to ritual. Nor to the spectacle. Both are impossible, after the formidable pulverizing effected by the political economy over the past two centuries. No. It is the advent of a radically new form of the insertion of music into communication, one that is overturning all of the concepts of political economy and giving new meaning to the political project. The only radically different course open for knowledge and social reality. The only dimension permitting the escape from ritual dictatorship, the illusion of representation, and the silence of repetition. Music, the ultimate form of production, gives voice to this new emergence, suggesting that we designate it *composition*.

There is no communication possible between men any longer, now that the codes have been destroyed, including even the code of exchange in repetition. We are all condemned to silence—unless we create our own relation with the world and try to tie other people into the meaning we thus create. That is what composing is. Doing solely for the sake of doing, without trying artificially to recreate the old codes in order to reinsert communication into them. Inventing new codes, inventing the message at the same time as the language. Playing for one's own pleasure, which alone can create the conditions for new communication. A concept such as this seems natural in the context of music. But it reaches far beyond that; it relates to the emergence of the free act, self-transcendence, pleasure in being instead of having. I will show that it is at the same time the inevitable result of the pulverization of the networks, without which it cannot come to pass, and a herald of a new form of socialization, for which self-management is only a very partial designation.

Composition is not easy to conceptualize. All political economy up to the present day, even the most radical, has denied its existence and rejected its political organization. Political economy wants to believe, and make others believe, that it is only possible to rearrange the organization of production, that the exteriority of man from his labor is a function of property and is eliminated if one eliminates the master of production. It is necessary to go much further than that. Alienation is not born of production and exchange, nor of property, but of usage: the moment labor has a goal, an aim, a program set out in advance in

a code—even if this is by the producer's choice—the producer becomes a stranger to what he produces. He becomes a tool of production, itself an instrument of usage and exchange, until it is pulverized as they are. From the moment there was an operability to labor, there was exteriority of the laborer. From the moment there was sacrificial ritual coded independently of the musician, the musician lost possession of music. Music then had a goal exterior to the pleasure of its producer, unless he could find pleasure—as is the case in repetition—in his very alienation, in being plugged into codes external to his work, or in his personal recreation of a preestablished score.

Exteriority can only disappear in composition, in which the musician plays primarily for himself, outside any operability, spectacle, or accumulation of value; when music, extricating itself from the codes of sacrifice, representation, and repetition, emerges as an activity that is an end in itself, that creates its own code at the same time as the work.

Composition thus appears as a negation of the division of roles and labor as constructed by the old codes. Therefore, in the final analysis, to listen to music in the network of composition is to rewrite it: “to put music into operation, to draw it toward an unknown praxis,” as Roland Barthes writes in a fine text on Beethoven.¹²⁶ The listener is the operator. Composition, then, beyond the realm of music, calls into question the distinction between worker and consumer, between doing and destroying, a fundamental division of roles in all societies in which usage is defined by a code; to compose is to take pleasure in the instruments, the tools of communication, in use-time and exchange-time as lived and no longer as stockpiled.

Is composition future or past? Is there a noise that can organize the transition toward it from the gray world of repetition? Is it possible to read composition in music—if it develops—as an indication of a more general mutation affecting all of the economic and political networks?

Music, in its relation to money, is once again prophetic, announcing the ultimate outcome of the current crisis. Although the excess of repetition heralds a crisis of proliferation, although it renders the production of demand ineffective and the pseudocommunication instituting solitude unacceptable, it also ushers in composition—amid confusion on the part of creators; in and by the death of all the networks; outside codes, exchange, and usage.

It is a foreshadowing of structural mutations, and farther down the road of the emergence of a radically new meaning for labor, as well as new relations among people and between men and commodities. Hear me well: composition is not the same as material abundance, that petit-bourgeois vision of atrophied communism having no other goal than the extension of the bourgeois spectacle to all of the proletariat. It is the individual's conquest of his own body and potentials. It is impossible without material abundance and a certain technological level, but is not reducible to that.

Music is only the first skirmish in a long battle, for which we need a new theory and strategy if we are to analyze its emergence, manifestations, and results. Music is a foretoken of *evolution on the basis of behavior* in the human world, in a crisis announced by artists' refusal to be standardized by money.

The Fracture

Representation made repetition possible by means of the stockpile it constituted. And repetition created the necessary conditions for composition by organizing an amazing increase in the availability of music.

Composition can only emerge from the destruction of the preceding codes. Its beginnings can be seen today, incoherent and fragile, subversive and threatened, in musicians' anxious questioning of repetition, in their works' foreshadowing of the death of the specialist, of the impossibility of the division of labor continuing as a mode of production.

The New Noise

What practice of music should be read as the real harbinger of the future? The pseudonew proliferates today, making it difficult to choose. Musicology always situates this essential fracture back at the entry of noise into music. That was indeed when provocation and blasphemy, the cry and the body, first entered the spectacle. Their entry was imperative in a world in which brutal noise was omnipresent; it did not, however, translate into a real rupture of the existing networks. As early as 1913, Russolo was talking about "the crashing down of metal shop blinds, slamming doors, the hubbub of crowds, the variety of din, from stations, railways, iron foundries, spinning mills, printing works, electric power stations and underground railways and the absolutely new noises of modern war."¹²⁷ He invented an orchestra of vibrators, screechers, whistles. Honegger wrote a work, *Pacific 231* (1924), which reproduces the rhythm of the wheels of a train, and Antheil wrote a *Ballet mécanique* (1926), which calls for airplane propellers. In 1929, Prokofiev wrote *Pas d'acier*; Mossolov wrote *The Iron Foundry*; and Carlos Chavez, *HP*.

In Cage, the disruption is more evident; it can be seen in his negation of the channeled nature of music and the very form of the network, in his unconventional use of classical instruments and his contemptuous sneering at the meaning attributed to Art. When Cage opens the door to the concert hall to let the noise of street in, he is regenerating all of music: he is taking it to its culmination. He is blaspheming, criticizing the code and the network. When he sits motionless at the piano for four minutes and thirty-three seconds, letting the audience grow impatient and make noises, he is giving back the right to speak to people who do not want to have it. He is announcing the disappearance of the commer-

cial site of music: music is to be produced not in a temple, not in a hall, not at home, but everywhere; it is to be produced everywhere it is possible to produce it, in whatever way it is wished, by anyone who wants to enjoy it. The composer should

give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind of music, and set about discovering means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments.¹²⁸

But the musician does not have many ways of practicing this kind of music within the existing networks: the great spectacle of noise is only a spectacle, even if it is blasphemous, or “liquidating,” as Roger Caillois said about Picasso. It is not a new code. Both Cage and the Rolling Stones, *Silence* and “Satisfaction,” announce a rupture in the process of musical creation, the end of music as an autonomous activity, due to an intensification of lack in the spectacle. They are not the new mode of musical production, but the liquidation of the old.

Announcing the void, voicing insufficiency, refusing recuperation—that is blasphemy. But blasphemy is not a plan, any more than noise is a code. Representation and repetition, heralds of lack, are always able to recuperate the energy of the liberatory festival. The Jimi Hendrix Experience inspires dreams, but it does not give one the strength to put its message into practice, to use the musicians’ noise to compose one’s own order. One participates in a pop music festival only to be totally reduced to the role of an extra in the record or film that finances it. Selling the air in a gallery for a blank check, as Yves Klein did, is not sufficient to produce a new kind of painting, even if in doing so he completed the destruction of exchange.

We must also go beyond the simple reorganization of economic property. For these experiments demonstrate that one cannot get outside the world of repetition simply by attempting to organize the repetitive economy in a new way: the self-management of the repetitive is still repetitive; it is still tied to the same demands for the creation of value and is less efficient, because if the production of supply alone is self-managed, it makes it more difficult to produce demand, which necessitates a linkup with the media. Therefore, attempts to break away from mass music simply by challenging the system of record financing are condemned to failure, unless they are able to transcend themselves, as the example of free jazz will show.

Even if they are a sign of deeper changes and translate basic aspirations, they are not their concretization. Beyond the rupture of the economic conditions of music, composition is revealed as the demand for a truly different system of organization, a network within which a different kind of music and different social relations can arise. A music produced by each individual for himself, for pleasure outside of meaning, usage and exchange.

“Uhuru”¹²⁹—The Failure of the Economy of Free Music

Significantly, the economic struggle against repetition began where repetition was born, in the United States, at the center of a struggle against one of the most powerful cultural and economic colonizations. The organized and often consensual theft of black American music provoked the emergence of free jazz, a profound attempt to win creative autonomy, to effect a cultural-economic reappropriation of music by the people for whom it has a meaning.

The lessons of this experiment, of its inability to construct a truly new mode of production, are of capital importance for understanding the problems of composition. They are relevant to the entire political economy of repetition, and are indicative of the difficulties confronting attempts to escape it.

Free jazz was the first attempt to express in economic terms the refusal of the cultural alienation inherent in repetition, to use music to build a new culture. What institutional politics, trapped within representation, could not do, what violence, crushed by counterviolence, could not achieve, free jazz tried to bring about in a gradual way through the production of a new music outside of the industry.

Free jazz, which broke completely with the cautious version of jazz that had gained acceptance, ran into implacable monetary censorship.¹³⁰ Certain record companies in the United State went so far as to adopt the policy of no longer recording black musicians, only whites who played like blacks. Thus free jazz very quickly became a reflection of and a forum for the political struggle of blacks in reaction against their insertion into repetition. Attempts were made, rallying all of the colonized forms of music in opposition to the censorship of the official industry, to establish a parallel industry to produce and promote new music.

The musicians of free jazz first organized formally in 1959, when Bill Dixon and Archie Shepp founded the Jazz Composers' Guild, a quasi-union grouping. Then in 1965, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) was founded in Chicago; it was a kind of cooperative composed of about thirty black musicians, the purpose of which was to “fight against the dictatorship of the club owners, record companies, and critics” (Archie Shepp). In addition to defending professional interests, its aims were essentially to increase the opportunities for composers, instrumentalists, and groups to meet.

Then, the musicians directed their efforts toward becoming more independent of capital. From this point of view, the most interesting experiment was the Jazz Composers' Orchestra Association, successor of the Jazz Composers' Guild, which had been undermined by internal divisions and racial conflicts.

Founded by a white (Mike Mantler) and several blacks (Carla Bley, etc.), the JCOA encouraged musical research, but tried in particular to develop a distribution and production network for concerts and records parallel to the capitalist

circuit. This organization, functioning outside the main structures of the music industry, made it possible for several musicians to work without being obliged to record purely commercial records at too fast a pace.

The association was financed by pooling royalties, and by university and foundation support obtained by music "personalities" and teachers, like Thornton or Shepp. All of the musicians received an equal share of the total earnings. Other original economic organizations were founded in the same spirit, in an attempt to escape the laws of repetition, for example, self-managed orchestras such as Beaver's (360 Degree Experience).

With the exception of collective action, musicians never do their own promoting. Many blacks who should have been conscious of that a long time ago are realizing it now. We are only just beginning to make our mark and it's going very slowly, because many musicians are penniless. . . . We have to eliminate the studios and all of the middlemen who increase production costs for no reason.¹³¹

Since repetition today is based essentially on control over distribution, over the production of demand and not the production of the commodity, free jazz ran into difficulty promoting itself from within its own structures, in a world in which repetition monopolizes the major part of the market.

My recording of *Freedom and Unity* dates from 1967. But I wasn't able to make the record until 1969, and it wasn't until 1971 that the sales paid back the cost of producing it. The aim of a label like Third World is obviously not commercial. It is not so much a matter of selling as launching a collective project giving musicians a chance to progress, with each record having the value of a document of the evolution of our work. . . . To produce *Freedom and Unity*, I worked as a notary public. I was a student at the same time.¹³²

A new economic status accompanied the emergence of the new music, a truly spontaneous music of immediate enjoyment that escaped all crystallizations and used instruments in new ways, but was also very carefully crafted and at times very intellectual. The attainment of economic autonomy, the politicization of jazz, and the struggle for integration were contemporaneous. Free jazz, created with the Black Muslims, was experienced as a cultural renaissance, as something new, because of its references to Africa and black pride:

The white musician can jam if he's got some sheet music in front of him. He can jam on something he's heard jammed before. But that black musician, he picks up his horn and starts blowing some sounds that he never thought of before. He improvises, he creates, it comes from within. It's his soul; it's that soul music. . . . he will improvise; he'll bring it from within himself. And this is what you and I

want. You and I want to create an organization that will give us so much power we can sit and do as we please.¹³³

Since that time, the sound of free jazz, like the violent wing of the black movement, has failed in its attempt to break with repetition. It subsided, after being contained, repressed, limited, censored, expelled. After it failed to win real political power, it adopted new forms of creativity and cultural circulation.

The black people of America have adopted a more “reflective” political position, with everything that word implies. . . . It’s unwise to take needless risks, to make yourself obvious, to mouth off on television. That makes us vulnerable on every level, easily identified by reactionary forces.¹³⁴

Free jazz, a meeting of black popular music and the more abstract theoretical explorations of European music, eliminated the distinction between popular music and learned music, broke down the repetitive hierarchy.

It also shows how the refusal to go along with the crisis of proliferation created *locally* the conditions for a different model of musical production, a new music. But since this noise was not inscribed on the same level as the messages circulating in the network of repetition, it could not make itself heard. It was the herald of another kind of music, a mode of production outside repetition—after having failed as a *takeover of power in repetitive society*.

Representation and Composition: The Return of the Jongleurs

Along with this search for another power in repetition, continuing this mutation in the economy of music, there is a reappearance of very ancient forms of production.

First, there is a resurgence in the production of popular music using traditional instruments, which often are handmade by the musicians themselves—a resurgence of music for immediate enjoyment, for daily communication, rather than for a confined spectacle. No study is required to play this kind of music, which is orally transmitted and largely improvisational. It is thus accessible to everyone, breaking the barrier raised by an apprenticeship in the code and the instrument. It has developed among all social classes, but in particular among those most oppressed (the workers of the big industrial cities, Black American ghettos, Jamaican shantytowns, Greek neighborhoods, etc.). “True creativity lies with the foreigners, and culture is on the side of those who live on the margins of culture without living with it . . . the metics” (O. Revault d’Allones). Their music is generally without cultural references.

The number of small orchestras of amateurs who play for free has mushroomed. Music is thus becoming a daily adventure and an element of the subversive festival again. A very significant fact: the production and invention of in-

struments, nearly interrupted for three centuries, is noticeably increasing. The creative labor is collective: what is played is not the work of a single creator; even if an individual's composition is taken as the point of departure, each musician develops his own instrumental part. Production takes the form of one of collective composition, without a predetermined program imposed upon the players, and without commercialization. The groups stay together only a short time, dissolving when their members rejoin repetitive life. This music is creating a new practice of musical production, a day-to-day and subversive practice. It is incontestably aided by the existence of the records and representations it subverts, from which it draws inspiration and innovations. A new usage of records is also developing: records are being made with only instrumentation, meant to be sung to, in other words, allowing one to insinuate oneself into production (*Minus One*).

This does not constitute, therefore, a new form of popular music, but rather a new practice of music among the people. Music becomes the superfluous, the unfinished, the relational. It even ceases to be a product separable from its author. It is inscribed within a new practice of value. The labor of music is then essentially an "idleness" (D. Charles) irreducible to representation (to exchange) or to repetition (to stockpiling). It heralds the negation of the tool-oriented usage of things. By subverting objects, it heralds a new form of the collective imaginary, a reconciliation between work and play.

Although these new practices may faintly resemble those of the medieval jongleurs, they in fact constitute a break with sacrificial, representative, and repetitive music: before the advent of recording and modern sound tools, the jongleurs were the collective memory, the essential site of cultural creation, and the circulation of information from the courts to the people. Recording stabilized the musical work and organized its commercial stockpiling. But now the field of the commodity has been shattered and a direct relation between man and his milieu is being reestablished.

Music is no longer made to be represented or stockpiled, but for participation in collective play, in an ongoing quest for new, immediate communication, without ritual and always unstable. It becomes nonreproducible, irreversible. "If we compose music, we are also composed by history, by situations that constantly challenge us" (L. Berio). Music is ushering in a new age. Should we read this emergence as the herald of a liberation from exchange-value, or only of the emplacement of a new trap for music and its consumers, that of automanipulation? The answer to these questions, I think, depends on the radicality of the experiment. Inducing people to compose using predefined instruments cannot lead to a mode of production different from that authorized by those instruments.

That is the trap. The trap of false liberation through the distribution to each individual of the instruments of his own alienation, tools for self-sacrifice, both monitoring and monitored. A trap upon which singing to recorded music and

Minus One shed direct light, since their future development will permit their inscription within a code, their becoming a form of semiautonomous participation, a tool for liberation and a pedagogy of channelization.

The Relational Value of Composition

The New Unity of the Body

Thus in a reversal of the current process, which starts with the conception and ends with the object, the outcome of labor no longer “pre-exists ideally in the imagination of the worker.”¹³⁵ To modify the meaning of form in the course of its production, to empty exchange/use-value of its alienating content, is to attempt to designate the unsayable and the unpredictable. A structuring of desire and production can then be outlined on the basis of what music makes audible of them.

The essential mutation, of course, is in the relation to oneself that music makes possible. The disappearance of codes, and the destruction of the communication that took place in the sacrifice or the commercial simulacrum, at first open the way for the worker’s reappropriation of his work. Not the recuperation of the product of his labor, but of his labor itself—labor to be enjoyed in its own right, its time experienced, rather than labor performed for the sake of using or exchanging its outcome. The goal of labor is no longer necessarily communication with an audience, usage by a consumer, even if they remain a possibility in the musical act of composition. The nature of production changes; the music a person likes to hear is not necessarily the same music he likes to play, much less improvise. In composition—the absence of exchange, self-communication, self-knowledge, nonexchange, self-valorization—labor is not confined within a preset program. There is a collective questioning of the goal of labor. To my knowledge, the economic organization of this form of production lacking defined goals, and the nature of the new relation it creates between man and matter, consumption-production and pleasure, have never been expressed in theory before.

In composition, to produce is first of all to take pleasure in the production of differences. Musicians foresaw this new concept. For example, in the language of jazz, to improvise is “to freak freely.” A freak is also a monster, a marginal. To improvise, to compose, is thus related to the idea of the assumption of differences, of the rediscovery and blossoming of the body. “Something that lets me find my own rhythm between the measures” (Stockhausen). Composition ties music to gesture, whose natural support it is; it plugs music into the noises of life and the body, whose movement it fuels. It is thus laden with risk, disquieting, an unstable challenging, an anarchic and ominous festival, like a Carnival with an unpredictable outcome. This new mode of production thus

entertains a very different relation with violence: in composition, noise is still a metaphor for murder. To compose is simultaneously to commit a murder and to perform a sacrifice. It is to become both the sacrificer and the victim, to make an ever-possible suicide the only possible form of death and the production of life. To compose is to stay repetition and the death inherent in it, in other words, to locate liberation not in a faraway future, either sacred or material, but in the present, in production and in one's own enjoyment.

Relationship

Composition does not prohibit communication. It changes the rules. It makes it a collective creation, rather than an exchange of coded messages. To express oneself is to create a code, or to plug into a code in the process of being elaborated by the other.

Composition—a labor on sounds, without a grammar, without a directing thought, a pretext for festival, in search of thoughts—is no longer a central network, an unavoidable monologue, becoming instead a real potential for relationship. It gives voice to the fact that rhythms and sounds are the supreme mode of relation between bodies once the screens of the symbolic, usage and exchange are shattered. In composition, therefore, music emerges as a relation to the body and as transcendence.

Of course, in sacrifice and representation, the body is already contained in music: Ulysses' companions risked dying of pleasure by listening to the song of sirens, and the duos in *Così fan tutte* and *Tristan und Isolde* express a real erotic drive. Music, directly transected by desires and drives, has always had but one subject—the body, which it offers a complete journey through pleasure, with a beginning and an end. A great musical work is always a model of amorous relations, a model of relations with the other, of eternally recommenceable exaltation and appeasement, an exceptional figure of represented or repeated sexual relations. “With music, I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure,” wrote Freud;¹³⁶ and yet psychoanalysis has had next to nothing to say about noise and music.

But in composition, it is no longer, as in representation, a question of marking the body; nor is it a question of producing it, as in repetition. It is a question of taking pleasure in it. That is what relationship tends toward. An exchange between bodies—through work, not through objects. This constitutes the most fundamental subversion we have outlined: to stockpile wealth no longer, to transcend it, to play for the other and by the other, to exchange the noises of bodies, to hear the noises of others in exchange for one's own, to create, in common, the code within which communication will take place. The aleatory then rejoins order. Any noise, when two people decide to invest their imaginary and their desire in it, becomes a potential relationship, future order.

From Noise to Image: The Technology of Composition

Like representation and repetition, composition needs its own technology as a basis of support for the new form of value. While recording was intended as a reinforcement for representation, it created an economy of repetition. As with the preceding codes, the technology upon which composition is based was not conceived for that purpose. If representation is tied to printing (by which the score is produced), and repetition to recording (by which the record is produced), composition is tied to the instrument (by which music is produced). We may take this as a herald of considerable future progress, in the production and in the invention of new instruments.

Once again, music appears to me to be premonitory. The current burgeoning of instruments in the expansive field of sound—as great as that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which announced the industrial revolution—foreshadows a new mutation in technology.

In this context, there is an innovation that is only now beginning to play out its role, a herald of this mutation: the recording of images. Today, the recording of images is intended to be an instrument for the visual stockpiling of concerts and films and as a means of pedagogy, in other words, as a tool of repetition. Soon, however, it may become one of the essential technologies of composition. Television, the prehistory of image recording, did not succeed in giving visual status to music; the body disappeared, and individual image recording emerged as an innovation devoid of music. In a preliminary period, it may become a means of stockpiling access to films, on an individual basis or in the form of a central memory bank. But the essential usage of the image recorder seems to me to be elsewhere, in its private use for the manufacture of one's own gaze upon the world, and first and foremost upon oneself. Pleasure tied to the self-directed gaze: Narcissus after Echo. Eroticism as an appropriation of the body.

The new instrument thus emerging will find its real usage only in the production, by the consumer himself, of the final object, the movie made from virgin film. The consumer, completing the mutation that began with the tape recorder and photography, will thus become a producer and will derive at least as much of his satisfaction from the manufacturing process itself as from the object he produces. He will institute the spectacle of himself as the supreme usage.

The Political Economy of Composition

Composition belongs to a political economy that it is difficult to conceptualize: production melds with consumption, and violence is not channeled into an object, but invested in the act of doing, a substitute for the stockpiling of labor that simulates sacrifice. Each production-consumption (composition) entity can call its program into question at any moment; production is not foreseeable before

its conclusion. It becomes a starting point, rather than being an end product; and time is lived time, not only in exchange and usage, but also in production itself.

The bulk of commodity production then shifts to the production of tools allowing people to create the conditions for taking pleasure in the act of composing. We can see—in the makeup of musical groups, in the creation of new instruments, in the development of the imaginary through the planning of personal gardens,¹³⁷ in production using rudimentary tools—an outline of what composition can mean: each person dreaming up his own criteria, and at the same time his way of conforming to them.

Just as the enjoyment of music no longer passes through exchange or stockpiling, the enjoyment of production is exterior to its insertion in a market or system of allocation. It is thus necessary to conceive of other systems of economic organization, and especially other political institutions. For violence is no longer channeled into sacrifice; it no longer mimics itself in representation; it is no longer threatening, as it was in repetition. The wager of the economy of composition, then, is that social coherence is possible when each person assumes violence and the imaginary individually, through the pleasure of doing.

Composition liberates time so that it can be lived, not stockpiled. *It is thus measured by the magnitude of the time lived by men, which takes the place time stockpiled in commodities.*

One may wonder whether a model such as this, composed of liberated time and egoistic enjoyment, is possible. And in fact, on closer inspection, seemingly insoluble problems of coherence arise: first, others' noise can create a sound of cacophony, and each difference thus created, between units of composition, may be felt as a nuisance. Second, the complementarity of productions is no longer guaranteed, because compositional choices are not confronted by a pricing system (the market in representation) or ranking (planning in repetition).

Thus this social form for the recreation of difference—assuming it does not fall back into the commodity and its rules, in other words, into representation and repetition—presupposes the coexistence of two conditions: *tolerance and autonomy*. The acceptance of other people, and the ability to do without them. That being the case, composition obviously appears as an abstract utopia, a polar mode of organization that takes on meaning at an extraordinary moment of cultural climax.

Even then, composition may be considered an impossibility. There are several reasons for this. First, as Pierre Boulez writes:

It is necessary to deny all invention that takes place in the framework of writing. . . . Finally, improvisation is not possible. Even in a baroque ensemble, where the laws were more or less codified, where you had figures instead of chords, in other words, where you could place them in a certain position but not in just any way—even in this period improvisation did not produce exclusively masterpieces. People

speak of Bach's improvisations, for example. I believe that Bach wrote on the basis of what he had improvised, and that what he wrote was the more interesting of the two. Often, these improvisations are nothing more than pure, sometimes bizarre, samplings of sound that are not at all integrated into the directives of a composition. This results in constant arousal and appeasement, something I find intolerable. . . . The dialectic of form takes precedence over the possible; everybody arouses everybody else; it becomes a kind of public onanism.

The impossibility of improvisation thus forbids composition. The second reason is given by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who writes that it is difficult to concede that there exists in each person the potential for musical creation:

Theoretically, if not in fact, any adequately educated man could write poems, good or bad; whereas musical invention depends on special gifts, which can be developed only where they are innate.¹³⁸

If both Boulez and Lévi-Strauss, or either one, are right there will be no composition. But nothing in modern biology confirms the validity of these value statements, which confuse creativity with the present code of creativity. Neither will there be composition if it is not clearly willed as a project to transcend repetition, in other words, if the State does not stop confusing well-being with the production of demand. Any policy that valorizes the usage of objects instead of the means of producing them retards composition. On the other hand, a massive decentralization of power would accelerate it. In this case, then, the transition from one network to another is very different from the two preceding transitions. For the first time, it is not in the interest of the economic apparatus. For the first time, the requirements of the accumulation of commodity-value are reactionary and demand policies that are objectively conservative, even if they are camouflaged as an equalization of the conditions of access to commodities. In this sense, the creators themselves are in a precarious position, because composition contains the germ of their disappearance as specialists. So what noise will arrive to create the new order? We have seen that musicians' regaining their music is not enough. There is only one way: recovering—in the units of production and of life, in undertakings and collectivities—some meaning for things. The State can play a positive role only by encouraging the extensive production of means of doing rather than objects, the production of instruments rather than music. A profound mutation, delocalized and diffuse, that fundamentally changes the code of social reproduction, thus leading to a radical challenge to the somber power of the managers of repetition.

But the dangers are immense, for once the repetitive world is left behind, we enter a realm of fantastic insecurity.

Music no longer recounts a mastered, reasoned history. It is inscribed in a

labyrinth, a time graph. After the third stage of the attainment of power described by Castaneda has been passed, the stage in which man has conquered power, the relation to technology and knowledge changes, because the relation to the essential has changed. Three moments interpenetrate and stand in opposition to one another.

Perhaps the reader will have remarked what mysterious and powerful links exist between technology and knowledge on the one hand, and music on the other. Everywhere present, lurking behind a form, knowledge molds itself to the network within which it is inscribed: in representation, it is a model, a schema, the value of which depends on its empirical suitability to the measurement of facts; it is the study of partitions (*partitions*, also “scores”). In repetition, it is genealogy, the study of replication. In composition, it is cartography, local knowledge, the insertion of culture into production and a general availability of new tools and instruments.

Composition thus leads to a staggering conception of history, a history that is open, unstable, in which labor no longer advances accumulation, in which the object is no longer a stockpiling of lack, in which music effects a reappropriation of time and space. Time no longer flows in a linear fashion; sometimes it crystallizes in stable codes in which everyone’s composition is compatible, sometimes in a multifaceted time in which rhythms, styles, and codes diverge, interdependencies become more burdensome, and rules dissolve.

In composition, stability, in other words, differences, are perpetually called into question. Composition is inscribed not in a repetitive world, but in the permanent fragility of meaning after the disappearance of usage and exchange. It is neither a wish nor an anxiety, but the future contained in the history of the economy and in the predictive reality of music. It is already present—in its fragility and instability, in its transcendence and fortuitousness, in its requirement of tolerance and autonomy, in its estrangement from the commodity and materiality—implicit in our everyday relation to music. It is also the only utopia that is not a mask for pessimism, the only Carnival that is not a Lenten ruse.

It announces something that is perhaps the most difficult thing to accept: henceforth *there will be no more society without lack*, for the commodity is absolutely incapable of filling the void it created by suppressing ritual sacrifice, by deritualizing usage, by pulverizing all meaning, by obliging man to communicate first to himself.

Living in the void means admitting the constant presence of the potential for revolution, music and death: “What can a poor boy do, except play for a rock ‘n’ roll band?” (“Street Fighting Man,” Rolling Stones). Truly revolutionary music is not music which expresses the revolution in words, but which speaks of it as a lack.

Bringing an end to repetition, transforming the world into an art form and life into a shifting pleasure. Will a sacrifice be necessary? Hurry up with it,

because—if we are still within earshot—the World, by repeating itself, is dissolving into Noise and Violence.

Five people in a circle. Are they singing? Is there an instrument accompanying them? Is Brueghel announcing this autonomous and tolerant world, at once turned in on itself and in unity?

For my own part, I would like to hear the Round Dance in the background of *Carnival's Quarrel with Lent* as the culmination, not the inauguration, of a struggle begun twenty-five centuries ago. I would like to hear it as the forerunner of postpenitence, postsilence, at the back exit of the church, not the rearguard of the pagan Carnival, supplanted by capitalist Lent in the foreground.

Unless Brueghel, by making the field interpenetrate, rooting each within the other, wishes to signify that everything remains possible and to make audible, as though by a message coded in irony, the inevitable victory of the aleatory and the unfinished.